



SNAICC
National Voice for our Children
(Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation)
Melbourne Polytechnic
Level 7, 20 Otter Street
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14 February 2019

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST INVEST IN EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTATIVE SERVICES IN RESPONSE TO YOUTH SUICIDE

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children calls for a national strategy on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child wellbeing, focusing on early intervention and preventative measures, in response to the latest coronary report on the *Inquest into the deaths of 13 children and young persons in the Kimberley region, Western Australia*.

The increase in youth suicides for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people across Australia is a national tragedy. We must take action so that our families can heal and our children can grow up healthy, happy and safe.

With the recent increase in Indigenous suicides, Western Australian State Coroner Ros Fogliani launched the inquest in 2017 after the shocking death of a 10-year-old girl in 2016. It follows the Hope inquest (2008) into the death of 22 Aboriginal people in the Kimberley.

Coroner Fogliani concluded the tragic deaths were shaped by “the crushing effects of intergenerational trauma” and made 42 recommendations that would help target the issue.

SNAICC supports the report’s recognition and support for people with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), as well as investment in preventative strategies for new parents, more investment in early learning services, school engagement programs and family advocates.

We know that the formative years of a child’s life are critical in affecting their future health and wellbeing, proving the need for further investment in Aboriginal community-controlled early education.

Western Australia has the highest rates of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care and the lowest investment in evidence-based strategies for redress, as clearly shown in the [Family Matters Report 2018](#). There is a long way to go before outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are improved, and factors that may lead children to take their own lives are addressed.

SNAICC calls on the Federal Government to take action by working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to co-design an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s strategy that focuses on improving outcomes for our children, including addressing issues contributing to youth suicide.

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“If the government genuinely wants to turn things around, Aboriginal-led policy development and working with Aboriginal families, communities and services is the only way we’re going to see positive change,” said Maureen O’Meara, WA Family Matters Co-Chair.

“It is crucial that we act now to put measures in place to support our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to improve the lives of our children so that they can grow up strong and happy.”

“There is nothing more devastating than losing our children through trauma. It has to stop.”

ENDS/

For more information please visit www.snaicc.org.au or contact:

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About SNAICC – National Voice for our Children:

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children is the national non-governmental peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. We work for the fulfilment of the rights of our children, in particular to ensure their safety, development and wellbeing.

Founded in 1981, SNAICC was established to engage in activities that promote and accommodate a strong voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

Over the past 30 years SNAICC’s efforts has resulted in many key milestones and achievements both in policy developments at state, territory and federal levels and in developing innovative and useful resources for the sector.

SNAICC is governed by an influential Board of Directors made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled children and family services.

About Family Matters

Family Matters is Australia’s national campaign to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture. The campaign is led by SNAICC – National Voice for our Children – the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Our goal is to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 2040.

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